

BELINDA,

OR,

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. C—

DEDICATED TO

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

Hard is the fortune which the Fair attends.

LYTT.

In TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

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TO
HER GRACE
THE
DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

*T*HERE are few Authors, especially
of Romances and Novels, who have not
deviated in some Measure from the Rules
of Grammar or Nature. The Style is
generally too pompous or too common:
but the Writer of these Sheets flatters
herself

iv D E D I C A T I O N.

herself that the Reader will find nothing to surpass probability; and that Simplicity, more than Bombast, has been the Author's Guide.

With this Consideration, she begs Leave to offer it to the Public, assured of their candid Liberality; and to dedicate it to your Grace, as the only Person worthy the Notice of a Writer of these Kind of Romances—for it is well known that your Grace has patronized many Works of Literature; and if the following Narrative is found worthy your espousal, the Writer is amply rewarded for her Pains,

if

DEDICATION. V

if not—greater the Honor that is conferred upon the Author.

So many of these Works have been already produced by the Pens of Ladies, that the Majority of Critics deem them unworthy their Perusal: but if Ladies supply the Stage, why not the Library? and a good Novel in my Opinion answers the same Purpose as a good Play.

Should my Pen ever aim at any Thing higher than a Novel, there is no Person I would sooner inscribe it to than his Grace your Husband; being by all the World allowed to be a Man of Sense and Generosity.

vi DEDICATION.

*Generosity: I pray then, Madam, accept
this as your Right, and what I next
produce I will deem his; to assure both
your Graces that I am*

Your most respectful

And obedient Servant,

C—

B E L I N D A,

OR

THE FAIR FUGITIVE.

CHAPTER I.

SIR John Maynard and Mr. Menrill had for some months met at the same tavern, had sociably drank their bottle of port together, talk'd over the news of the day, and found to their mutual satisfaction that their sentiments on most subjects were pretty nearly the same. Of course a friend-

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B

Ship

ship had insensibly commenced between them, and if at any time either of them failed coming to their usual rendezvous, the other found a blank which none of the rest of the company could so well fill up to his mind. Yet with all this intimacy and cordiality they had never met any where else, nor were they in the least acquainted with each other's family or connections: both great politicians, and no less fond of their bottle, domestic matters had never occurred to them. One evening however Mr. Mennill, after expressing the satisfaction he had so long received from Sir John's acquaintance, said "pray my good friend have you a son? if you have, and

and he is as pleasant a companion as I have found you to be, what say you to making a match between him and my daughter? I can give her thirty thousand pounds, and will do it if she marries a young fellow after my own heart, if not, not a six-pence. She is a fine girl, and I believe, as the world goes, a good one."

Sir John smiled at this blunt proposal: but knowing his friend was by no means a man of ceremony, replied he had two, and either of them was perfectly at the young lady's service; he wished for nothing more anxiously than to see them well settled, that he might have no farther care.

"Two," replied Mr. Mennill, "is exactly one too many; since your estate and title must of course go to the eldest, and it does not follow that he is the most deserving; at least I have observed the younger are generally the finest fellows; yet with my girl's fortune that will never do. However there is no rule without exception; your eldest may have the advantage in every respect, and I know not at this moment a man whose alliance would please me better than your own. My wife has been dead some years. My daughter, I take it for granted, begins to think 'tis high time she should figure in a house of her own; mine, to say truth,

truth, is not calculated to afford her all the satisfaction she might expect. There are some circumstances rather awkward attending it; yet a man cannot give up every satisfaction merely to please his children. The truth is, Sir John, I have a sort of tenderness for a certain person in my family, who, tho' she suits me very well, I do not think quite so eligible a companion for my girl; our connection was formed before Belinda left school. You are the only person I have let into this secret. These things will happen, you know, Sir John; I have had one wife, so ought every good subject; but I found one enough. Yet—you understand me—

now this matter considered, as my daughter must marry one day or other I suppose, why the sooner the better—not that I will throw her away neither—I know by experience the value of money; 'tis the *summum bonum* of this world; with it a man may command all that's worth enjoying in it, without it nothing. This is my maxim, nor shall I be easily persuaded to adopt any other, and, if I do not very much mistake your character, Sir John, you are of the same opinion. Love is a mighty pretty thing for girls in their teens to talk about; but a few years experience never fails to convince them 'tis of no other use."

" You

"You are perfectly right," replied Sir John; "and talk like a man who knows the world; but young folks are not easily made converts to this doctrine."

"True," said Mr. Mennill; "but when a father knows he is right, I presume he is at liberty to make converts of his children by whatever means he finds most likely to succeed. Now a coach and six, or beggary, is the kind of alternative few girls in these days I fancy would be long at a loss to decide upon."

"Why no as you say," answered Sir John, "the difference is pretty striking I confess; but you forget

that a fine girl may chance to chuse for herself an agreeable medium. She may meet with a man who will take her without fixpence—what then comes of your threatened beggary?”

“ Oh, most welcome, I desire no better,” cried his friend; “ all I say is, that my fortune shall never be bestowed upon any man who does not bring an equivalent; and now let me ask you, Sir John, where your two sons are, as I am impatient to have this business happily settled.”

“ I most cordially join in your wishes,” answered his friend, “ and have the pleasure to tell you, my eldest boy is, unless a father’s partiality

tiality blinds me, not only the handsome, but as spirited a young fellow as any in the three kingdoms. No two beings were ever greater contrasts to each other than him and his brother; they are the produce of different mothers; for I, tho' my ideas of matrimony are pretty much like your own, was by some means or other drawn into the snare twice; the first I married from prudential motives, as in fact every wise man ought to do; but I was fool enough to be caught by a pair of bright eyes the second time, that is to say I married for love. Yet in point of happiness, upon the whole a feather would have turned the

scale after those bewitching eyes were grown familiar to mine. Be that as it will, my first certainly knew best what sort of heir I wished should enjoy my estate; and on that account, if not on several others, deserved the preference; for my beauty produced me a mere bookworm; his whole delight is in study, nor do I believe the finest eyes that ever sparkled would have power to draw *his* from the contemplation of the stars. Yet if you should chance to like his character the best, in point of fortune they are nearly on a par, for an uncle of Edmond's, who has the civility to insist upon it that Charles, my eldest, is neither
more

more nor less than a compleat cock-comb, has set his brother down as his heir. Like to like, you know, Mr. Mennill, as the proverb says; for he too you may guess by what I have said, is a profound scholar, which between ourselves I look upon to be a profound farce; what have we, who are born to inherit good estates, to do with Greek and Latin; if a fellow wants bread, and can contrive to get it by that means, well and good; but does a man make a more brilliant figure in society because his head is filled with languages no mortal either speaks or cares whether he can speak or not. The very reverse—while learning
ing

ing these, the more essential accomplishments are neglected, nay despised, and he comes from college a mere savage. Now my son Charles——”

“Oh! say no more,” cried his friend; “Charles is the man. I would as soon marry my girl to a country school-master as throw her away upon a fellow, who tho’ he were rich as an emperor, would be more anxious to ascertain the colour of Cleopatra’s eyes, than those of his wife. I detest your antients, as they call them; commend me to those who do as others do. I find no faults in the moderns, for my part; they may talk of the last age

as they please, but I never desire to see a better than the present."

This important point settled, as the two friends believed, so much to their satisfaction, (for they had not an idea that any obstacles could possibly arise to prevent the accomplishment of their plan) they parted in high good humour, having first agreed to meet again the next evening to talk the matter over once more, and to appoint a day for introducing the parties concerned to each other in due form. This, and conducting them to St. George's church, they very wisely concluded was all they had now to do. As to any degree of reluctance on the part of Miss Mennill

Mennill or the gay Charles, it never once entered their head, and if it had 'tis to be presumed such were the old gentlemens notions of love, and parental authority, they could be at no loss for means to conquer it. The fact is, they had not the most distant idea that a fine girl with so large a fortune could have any objections to a fine young fellow with fortune equal to her own; and on a superficial view of the matter their way of thinking appears to be exceedingly natural; yet I fear some objections will occur in the course of the negociation, which, however unexpected by the two friends, may chance to retard, if not wholly disconcert their measures.

Miss

Miss Mennill had at this period just entered her nineteenth year. She lost the best of mothers at an age too young to be sensible of her misfortune, and such it was beyond expression great to her, as her father, tho' by the world esteemed a cheerful good kind of man, was of all others least qualified to superintend the education of a daughter. He had been, and still was, a free liver, a *free thinker* is now so fashionable a character, that I fear, were I to add he was that also, it would, by too many of my readers be included in the list of his good qualities. Some, however, there may be, who before they venture to decide the point,

point, may wish to have an easy and clear definition of the appellation, and to such I answer 'tis a being who *never thinks at all*, but who, with a confident self sufficient air pronounces all religion a *bore*; a phrase which has had its day, but is, I am told, on the point of being discarded. What other will be adopted by the *beau monde* to supply its place, is a secret I am not yet acquainted with; but no doubt they will be fortunate enough to find one *equally expressive*.

She had left school about three years, and from that time had resided chiefly with Lady Sedley, a relation of her mothers; who, having

ing no children of her own, had taken particular pleasure in completing those accomplishments she had already acquired by the most celebrated masters. Nature had formed her lovely—to describe beauty, can answer no purpose, since 'tis fifty to one if after the most accurate description I can give, the reader will form a just idea; let every person then, who may chance to interest themselves in Miss Mennill's history, suppose her that stile of beauty they most admire; let me, however, add, she had, with a face and person indisputably lovely, the most engaging manners, the most tender, generous heart that ever animated so
fair

fair a form, a great share of unaffected vivacity, and so fine an understanding, that to know and not admire her, was a thing impossible. Such was the daughter of Mr. Mennill: he was truly sensible of her worth, and not a little vain of being the father of one so highly accomplished; yet, partial as he was to her, the circumstance already mentioned, made him anxious to have her properly disposed of, that is to say, married to a man of rank and fortune. These were the only qualifications he thought essential to happiness; and in this he certainly is not singular, tho' perhaps a little deceived; at least there was a time when other requisites were deemed

deemed necessary; but we have found the art of being happy on less rigid terms. Lady Sedley was at this time, tho' not in her *premier jeunesse*, being near thirty, a charming woman, yet her beauty was her least perfection. She gave her unreluctant hand to Sir James, who she looked upon as the most amiable of men when too young perhaps to be a competent judge of merit; one unfortunate defect at least in his character she was an utter stranger to—a defect, for which I am inclined to think there is no perfect remedy; he had a tincture of jealousy in his disposition, which, in spite of a conduct wholly irreproachable, had occasioned

caused much distress to his lovely wife: she was, however, sensible that mortals had no title to expect felicity in this world, *that a something* there ever must be to prevent it, and this she looked upon as the barr to hers. Conscious of the rectitude of her own heart, she was resigned to her fate, and took every possible means to give as little cause for it as woman could do. Sir James adored her; had he beheld her with more indifference, 'tis probable she would have suffered less from that suspicious, that tormenting passion.

The family were, at the time this treaty took place between the two friends, at Sir James's seat, near Windsor.

Windfor. Miss Mennill had passed some weeks with them, and pleased herself with the hopes of spending the whole summer with her estimable friend. In the mean time, Sir John and Mr. Mennill had, as agreed upon at their last meeting, spent another evening together at the tavern, had drank a bottle or two extraordinary while arranging their plan, and before they parted had finally settled the whole business.

Before we proceed, it may not be amiss to say a word or two concerning Charles Maynard, for whom his father is thus kindly providing so lovely a companion. Perhaps my readers may have already formed an
idea

idea of his character from what has been said in a former page, and probably a very just one; however lest they should have failed in any particular trait, I will just add he was, in every sense of the expression, a modern fine gentleman, a member of all the fashionable clubs, figured occasionally at Newmarket, lounged at the opera, laughed, chatted, and ogled every fine woman he met with, and was of course a prodigious favorite in every gay circle. I had almost forgot to say he was handsome, and I should have been to blame, since, however comprehensive the phrase a modern fine gentleman may be, it certainly
does

does not necessarily include that desirable perfection; but, *with that addition*, who will presume to dispute his being an irresistible creature, or be surprised that his father, who in his youth had been formed on the same plan himself, should have pronounced him the finest young fellow in the kingdom. Nothing could be more just than his telling Mr. Mennill the two brothers were in every respect the very reverse of each other, 'twas not in nature to form a greater contrast. Charles, strictly speaking, was endowed with no one good quality, unless a handsome person and libertine principles can be looked upon as such, yet he

was

was universally admired, and esteemed a lively, pleasant companion; but handsome as the world allowed him to be, it was generally confessed that Edmond was infinitely more so: his person was uncommonly fine, and his face in the most perfect style of manly beauty. His smiles were irresistibly engaging, his manner easy and unaffected. Sir John, who had scarcely ever looked into a book since he left college had set him down as a mere *pedant*, or book-worm as he called it, because study was his passion. He had read all the best authors, not only in his own language, but in most others; and not merely read them, he had to
the

the utmost improved by them both his heart and head; but as I trust his character will unfold itself more in the course of these memoirs than I can do by my pen, I will add no more, except what I have indeed already said, that he was by no means Sir John's favorite. Charles was every thing in his eyes, and no great wonder since he was exactly what he had been himself when of his age, and what he deeply regretted it was no longer in his power to be.

Having, as I said above, settled all matters with Mr. Mennill highly to their mutual satisfaction, the latter, in consequence of their plan, wrote the following letter to his daughter.

CHAPTER II.

TO MISS MENNILL.

DEAR BELINDA.

I Am sorry to shorten a visit from which you promised yourself so much pleasure. My motives when known will I trust reconcile you to the disappointment. I will send the carriage for you on Tuesday morning: if you can prevail upon Sir James and Lady Sedley to accompany you to town, they cannot doubt my being happy to see them.

Your affectionate father

EDWARD MENNILL.

"Heavens!"

"Heavens!" cried Miss Mennill, having read the above as she and her friend were chatting together in her dressing room) "what can this unexpected summons mean? surely my father is not ill? no; his motives are it seems to reconcile me to the mortification; nay the letter is wrote by himself—very ill therefore he cannot be."

"Why thus hurried my dear girl, said Lady Sedley; I see nothing extraordinary in his wishing to have your company however I may regret the loss of it; your lively imagination is apt now and then to outrun your judgment."

"Thank you for your compliment,"

C 2

cried

cried Miss Mennill, smiling, "pray now let me have your ladyship's sentiments on this perplexing event; for I confess it puzzles me, since I cannot even guess what the business can be?"

"Suppose," replied Lady Sedley, "a lover should be in the case? would not Mr. Mennill be perfectly right in saying his motives would reconcile you to the disappointment?"

"That depends upon circumstances," answered Belinda; "and I shrewdly suspect, if he really has a project of that ridiculous nature in his head, we may chance to differ in opinion on the subject. To his sentiments on matrimony I am no stranger,

stranger, what are mine he has never yet deigned to ask, taking it for granted a daughter has only to obey, to give her hand when ordered to do so, to make her best curtsy, and be thankful. Now I on the contrary—but how ridiculous! no, no, believe me he is not so very provident, nor so great an advocate for that holy state as to give himself any trouble about fettering me. Come, my dear creature, let us say no more about it, for go I must; so let us have one more delightful ramble before I am driven out of this paradise; put on your hat, and let us set out; Sir James will perhaps accompany us. Apropos, in my flurry I have very

C 3

civilly

“silly forgot to intreat you will if possible comply with my father’s request; do for pity’s sake go with me, and then I shall not care for pence what are his motives.”

“That my dear you are sensible is out of my power; or have you forgot that we expect Mr. and Mrs. Cardigan to spend a week with us, and that they are to be here this very day.

“Ah! how horridly provoking!” cried Miss Mennill; “but for these formal souls you would probably have indulged me. A whole week? why my dear creature you will die of the vapours before that period is half over.”

“Think

"Think then," returned her friend, "whether I have not cause to regret your absence, whose charming vivacity would effectually have prevented so fatal a catastrophe."

Sir James now joined them, and asked if they were inclined to walk, as the morning was so fine.

"Oh," cried Belinda, "I for my part am perfectly inclined to do any thing in the world except the very thing I am ordered to do."

"Had I taken the liberty to say as civil a thing of you," replied Sir James, laughing, "I should have got into a pretty scrape. Pray may I ask what this order may be that has extorted so honest a confession?"

“Saucy as usual,” cried Belinda; “there read that eloquent billet-doux, and then tell me if I have not cause for my ill humour.”

“We have infinitely more cause,” replied Sir James, “if you mean to comply.”

“O comply I must, that’s too clear a case: my good father, though a pretty good one all things considered, is not a man to be jested with. He has a will of his own, so have I: but the misfortune is he has an idea that mine is on no occasion to take the lead. Think of his dragging me to town at this sweet season, after promising you should be honored with my company till you was heartily sick of.

of it—that I think was his flattering expression, was it not, Lady Sadley?”

“Something like it,” replied her friend, “though not quite so expressive. Suppose I were to write a line,” continued her ladyship, “and let him know we at present feel no alarming symptoms?”

“Ah, you might as well address your epistle to the man in the moon. His decrees are as fixed as those of the Medes and Persians. If I durst, I would say the old gentleman, when he is pleased to take a thing in his head, be it right or be it wrong, (and the latter will now and then happen in spite of his fatherly wisdom) he is as obstinate as a certain four legged

animal with long ears. But as a dutiful daughter I would not hint a thing of this nature for the world; go I positively must, so let me take one sweet ramble before I bid you adieu."

Away they went.

Next morning, Mr. Mennill's carriage was at the door before they had finished their breakfast. Belinda took a reluctant leave of her agreeable friends, promising if possible to return in a few days, and was sooner than she wished for set down at her father's in Portland Place.

"Well, my dear Belinda," said he, smiling, as she entered, "I hope you are not very much displeased at my sending for you from your friend."

Not

"Not very much, my dear Sir," replied she.

"Oh, you confess then you are a little so."

"Yes, a little I own, the country is at this time so delightful; but your commands are ever a law to me."

"That's a good girl," said her father, "and if you continue to see them in that proper light, I promise to make you one of the happiest girls in England."

"Upon my word, Sir," cried Belinda, "that will be a noble reward indeed for doing my duty; but to say truth I think myself nearly so already."

"Have

"Have you no curiosity," asked Mr. Mennill, "to know why I have sent for you home?"

"Oh! a *vast deal*," replied she, "but misses never *confess* they have any, you know."

"Well, since you are more honest than other young ladies," replied he, smiling, "I will gratify it: I am to have a few friends to dine with me to-morrow, and wanted you to do the honors of the table."

"Nay now, my dear Sir, you are certainly joking; how many good dinners have you given without my company; how could you be so cruel to send for me merely to carve a chicken?"

"Oh,

"Oh, but you may perhaps while doing that, do something else of more importance."

"Oh if I can manage to do one thing at a time as it should be," cried Miss Mennill, laughing, "'tis all you can reasonably expect from so giddy a head as mine is."

"Well, well, put on all your smiles and graces, and we shall see."

"Oh," replied Belinda, "that comes of course if there are any beaux in the question, if your party are all females, 'tis another affair, they may chance to like me as well, if not better, without them."

"Apropos," said Mr. Mennill, "suppose you send a card to your friend,

TO LADY SEDLEY.

As sure as fate, my father has more in his head than usual, and I really begin to fancy your ladyship's conjecture is not totally void of foundation; he received me with the highest good humour, seems in uncommonly high spirits, and in short hinted something about puning on all my smiles and graces, in order to conquer no doubt. Heaven only knows what kind of a being it is he intends I am to try their power upon; but the first peep I get will determine the point with me. Should I not like the creature's appearance, I shall be very sparing of both, and

necessity

necessity you know to waste those precious treasures. What confirms me in this opinion is, that Willson, when I called her to give her some orders, fimpere, and fidgeted if possible more than usual. Whether she is in the secret I know not, tho' 'tis more than probable, for she is a wondrous favorite of my father's, tho' I cannot say she so perfectly answers my ideas of perfection; but there's no accounting for taste. I could to be sure have asked if she knew who the guests were my father had invited; but I saw she wished for nothing better, and on that very account restrained my curiosity. Had I once set her tongue a going, and particularly

particularly on such a text, supposing there is a secret, it is hard to say when it would have ceased.

After all 'tis possible I may be wholly mistaken; mortified I certainly shall not be; for however desirable a few lovers may be, yet I am for chusing them myself, since my good father's ideas on that subject may chance to differ as far from mine as they do in regard to the pert Mrs. Willson.

Say nothing of all this silly chat to Sir James, as he will have cause to rally me should I be deceived. You shall know all, how, and about it, when the day is over; indeed I trust when it is I shall be permitted

Yours truly,

to

to return. Sure I am, if that pleasure is denied me, it will be no easy matter to force a smile. Adieu! my dear friend. My compliments to Sir James, and the nervous Mrs. Cardigan. What a joyous piece of still life it is.

Your's ever,

B. MENNILL.

Whether Belinda sat longer at her toilet next morning or not, I cannot with certainty affirm; but 'tis most certain appearances were not against her; for never had the labours of it produced a happier effect; she was if possible more lovely that day than ever. Her taste in dress

dress was truly elegant; a profusion in finery has no aid to beauty, and she judged wisely. She was of Thompson's opinion,

*"That beauty when unadorn'd, is adorned
the most."*

When she entered the drawing room, Mr. Mennill, looking upon her with pleasure, said, "upon my word, Belinda, you are armed at all points for conquest to day. The air of Windsor has given a fine bloom to your complexion, or have you purchased it of Warren?"

"No, thank heaven," cried she, smiling, "I am not yet reduced to that miserable case. Such as it is,
'tis

'tis all my own; and, since the air of Windsor has produced so flattering a change, I trust you will suffer me to return in a day or two left. I should lose it again in this suffocating town."

"That," replied her father, "will depend upon circumstances. Should you be as anxious to return to-morrow as you are to-day—"

"Nay, my dear Sir, you must think me a most unsteady creature indeed," cried she, "if you suppose I can change my mind so violently in one day."

"And yet I have a strange pre-sentiment that you will do it, Be-linda."

“Hnda,” replied he, with an expressive smile.

“What can all this mean, thought Miss Mennill, and began to feel a kind of palpitation.

Whether she would have asked any more questions, I know not, for at that moment Miss Bamfield, and Lady Ann Rochley were announced.

“Ah! my dear creature,” cried both the ladies in a breath, as they paid their compliments to Belinda, “how glad I am you are returned to us. What could tempt you to stay so horridly long at Windsor.”

“Every thing desirable in life,” replied Miss Mennill, “the company
of

of your fair selves excepted, that indeed was wanting."

"Oh! you civil creature," said Lady Ann; "yet tho' wanting, you contrived, it would seem, to do mighty well without us."

"Why one cannot, your ladyship knows, have every thing just as one would wish in this silly world of ours."

"Silly world!" cried Miss Barnfield, "I vow I like that epithet of all things; 'tis quite new, tho' ridiculous enough by the by; for I look upon this world as a very sensible, pretty kind of a world as one can reasonably desire."

"For

"For my part," said Lady Ann, "I would never desire a better."

"Oh be under no apprehension," said Mr. Menmill, shyly; "you modern fine ladies have no great chance for it."

"For what? I beseech you," cried her ladyship; "what does he mean, Belinda?"

"Mean," replied he, "why a better world; did you not say you never desired it?"

"Heavens! was there ever so horrid an insinuation. Pray now, my good friend, what have we poor modern fine ladies done that you should thus exclude us from that better world, if there is a better.

I suppose

I suppose you have bespoke it for yourself and a few of your selected friends; and indeed if we are to believe all that's said about it by the over wise ones, you will not find yourselves violently crouded. My aunt, who is a methodist, has I fancy been giving you a lecture."

"Oh I beseech you, tell me," cried Belinda, "what is a methodist; one hears of them perpetually, but I never yet could get a satisfactory definition of them, tho' I really long to have the matter made clear to me."

"Lord don't you know what a methodist is?" said Miss Barnfield.

"No,

"No, upon my honor," replied Miss Mennill.

"Oh then you need not be long at a loss, Lady Ann can fully inform you."

"Most willingly," said her ladyship; "why you must know they are generally of the poorer sort of folks, tho' now and then a person of fashion's head may be turned by them. They preach, and pray, and pretend to be prodigiously pious, would not miss going to church for the world, keep what is called good hours, that is, go soberly to bed when we are getting up, rail against the follies of the world, and in short

are a strange sort of unaccountable beings."

"And is that all?" said Belinda; "why I do not find any thing so desperately bad in all this; I have been taught to look upon them as a set of mad enthusiasts; by your ladyship's account I think they are on the contrary a very quiet, rational set of beings, unless you can convince me that preaching, praying, and going to church is irrational, for this seems to me the only crimes laid to their charge."

"Oh!" cried Lady Ann, "but that is not all, they are a queer, formal, hamdrum set of wretches; you have

have no idea how horribly disagreeable they make themselves."

"'Tis a thousand pities," said Miss Mennill, laughing, "for really were it not that you affirm they do make themselves disagreeable, I do not see that it is the natural effects of their mode of life; perhaps they appear so only to those who neither preach, pray, nor go to church."

They were now interrupted by the entrance of Sir John Maynard, and his two sons, nor was the subject renewed; they found others infinitely more to their taste. What they were, will best appear by Miss Mennill's letter to her

D 2

friend,

friend, Lady Sedley, which she wrote a day or two after, and which for that reason I now give to my readers.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

TO LADY SEDLEY.

TIS even so, my dearest friend;
your conjectures are perfectly
right; 'tis plain my father is deter-
mined at all events to get quit of
the charge of his daughter, or he
would never have formed the idea
of giving her to the insignificant,
fluttering animal he has, to my in-
finite mortification, made choice of.
I foresee much trouble and vexa-

tion from this ill concerted plan. I know him too well to believe he will think *my vote* in the business of any weight, indeed he has pretty clearly told me so, as your ladyship shall hear. I told you one glance would decide the matter with me, and I told you truth—my fate I fear is decided. Good heavens! how very unfortunate it is that parents and children so very seldom see things of this important kind in the same point of view; but let me endeavour to be more explicit, that your ladyship may know the reason of my being thus disconcerted.

I was pretty certain from several hints that dropped from my father,
that

that he had a match in view for me, and that I was torn from you, my dear Lady Sedley, on that account; yet I was not let fully into the important secret; oh, that I had, I might then perhaps have been more on my guard, I might at least have done my utmost to keep my eyes from gazing on an object but too amiable for my peace; yet had I been blind, had I been only mistress of the sense of hearing, the very sound of his voice—but let me, as I was saying, proceed methodically. Oh, my dear lady, sure no creature was ever so mortified, so wretchedly disappointed as your poor Belinda.

Lady Ann Rochley, and Miss Bamfield, were of our dinner party; you know them both; fine ladies. Who the beaux were to be I was not to be informed till their arrival. That moment came at last, and I will honestly confess found me not a little flurried; twas ridiculous no doubt, but the idea of what might be the consequence put it out of my power to be perfectly indifferent. The ladies had been with us some little time chatting about trifles as usual, when the drawing room door opened, and a servant announced Sir John Maynard and his two sons; which of the three, thought I, is to be the hero

hero of the day; the father I'll lay my life. This idea soon gave place to others more interesting; they were introduced in form, by which means I found the object whose first appearance, even before he had opened his lips, had struck me as the most elegant creature I had ever beheld, was the youngest son; a bad omen, I fear, thought I; for if my father really has any views of this kind, he knows the world too well not to find more charms in the heir than in a younger brother tho' he was endowed with all the virtues that ever adorned human nature.

In this state of uncertainty was I obliged to pass the day; nothing

particular was said by either of the old gentlemen; but Mr. Maynard, who looks upon himself as an irresistible being, paid me so many high flown compliments, said so many insipid silly things with a view to persuade me I had made a conquest of his insignificant heart, that I was fully convinced of the direct contrary, and that he not only beheld me with perfect indifference, but was utterly incapable of being in love with any mortal except himself. The amiable, the elegant Edmond—oh, Lady Sedley! what a contrast!—he, without any such intention I fear, made so deep an impression on mine, that I am persuaded no time,
no



no power on earth, will ever be able to efface it. Think then what a situation I am in; what have I to look forward to but misery?

Excuse my being more particular. I have forgot every thing that passed that fatal day, except that on it I lost my heart.

Next morning at breakfast—"Well, Belinda," said my father, "how do you like the new friends I introduced to you yesterday?"

"As your's, Sir," replied I, "they must ever be agreeable to me."

"Very civilly answered," said he; "but not quite so explicit as I wished. Would you now, my dear, persuade me you could spend a whole day with

with two such handsome young fellows as the Maynards, and only find them agreeable on my account; come, come, be honest for once; and tell me freely what you think of them."

"Why would you, my dear Sir, wish your daughter to fall in love then with every handsome man she may happen to spend a day with?"

"Not absolutely every one, Belinda; that would rather be a troublesome piece of business; but I suppose you do mean to fall in love, as you call it, one day or other with somebody."

"Not till somebody falls in love with me, Sir, if you please; misses ought not to be quite so forward, you know."

So

“So you beheld them both with perfect indifference then,” said he, smiling. “’Tis a pity, daughter, for one of them I promise you did not so easily escape from the power of your charms.”

The flatterer *Hope* now whispered in my ear, perhaps ’tis Edmond; my father is rich; who knows but charmed by his worth he may overlook his want of fortune and prefer his daughter’s happiness to wealth. This delightful thought darted across my mind while he spoke, and for a moment gave me unspeakable felicity. Ah! Lady Sedley! it was but for one poor moment.

“And pray Sir,” said I, “on which

which of your young friends have I had the honor to work this miracle?"

"No great miracle neither, Belinda; but humility is an amiable virtue, and so let it pass. First tell me, however, on which would you have wished to have wrought it had you had your choice?"

"O on the youngest out of pure charity," replied I, endeavouring to put on an air of cheerful indifference; you see humility is not the only virtue I possess; no fear of the eldest wanting admirers, his title and estate will secure that point, while poor Edmond's good qualities, with neither, may chance to be overlooked unless he meets with

with some generous spirited fair one like myself."

"He is prodigiously obliged to your generosity I must confess," said my father rather gravely; "but as I am not of quite so charitable a disposition I do not find myself at all inclined to second your very pious purpose; but make yourself easy, Edmond, though not the man of my choice, and of course not of *your's*, is not in a situation to require so great a sacrifice; he has a good estate of his own independent of his father, so you see you need not give him the preference *merely* because you fancied it would be a meritorious action. But we have trifled long enough

enough, Belinda, and I will now inform you that the elder is the man I have made choice of for a son, and expect you will from this day forward look upon him as the man who is to be your husband. I trust you will do me the justice to acknowledge I have made such a choice as you can have no objections to. He is young, handsome, well bred, and heir to his father's title and estate; a list of good qualities which I think may satisfy the ambition of any girl in England. Let me see proofs of your gratitude in the ready obedience you pay to my wishes. Sir John, I give you my word, is no less pleased with *you* than I am with his *son*, and

since

Since this is the case there is no occasion for fruitless delays. All matters in regard to settlements we have already arranged, so nothing remains for you to do my dear girl but to send for your milliner, mantua maker, &c. that you may as soon as possible be the happiest of wives, as I shall in that case be of fathers."

"Surely you are not serious, my dear Sir," said I; "can you suppose I am able on so very short an acquaintance to know enough of Mrs Maynard's disposition to decide a point of such infinite importance?"

"No certainly," replied he; "I should be most unreasonable indeed were I to suppose any such matter;
and

and what is more, I do not think you nor any girl of your age a proper judge of those affairs, had you been acquainted with him from your infancy; and I have very wisely on that account saved you the trouble of deciding; for which take my word for it a day will come on which you will be sensible I have acted as all prudent fathers who have a real regard for their children's happiness ought to do, whatever you may with true feminine perverseness think at present. Be assured it is only by age and experience this knowledge can be acquired. To these advantages you are yet a stranger; be thankful then, Belinda, that you have a father who

is

is not only willing but able to decide what is most likely to insure your felicity."

"But my dear sir," cried I, shocked beyond expression to find him so coolly determined, "I beseech you to hear me one moment with your usual indulgence."

"As many moments as you please, daughter," said he, interrupting me, "provided I am to hear no objections. Spare yourself as well as me that trouble; I know all I have done is for your good; what other view can I have?"

"Oh Sir!"

"None of your *oh's*! or *ah's*! I intreat you Belinda; this is mere perverseness.

verseness. You confess you are not acquainted with him, how then in the name of common sense can you presume to offer objections. I know him well; I have told you he is possessed of every requisite to render you the happiest of your silly, obstinate sex. I will not suppose you quite so impertinent as to deny me to judge."

"I am very far from being so impertinent, my dear sir," said I, "yet surely, kind and indulgent as I have ever found you, you will not now refuse to hear me patiently."

"I have already told you, Belinda, I am ready to hear you as long as you please; but I have also
told

told you on what condition; and by all this silly stuff it appears to me you are not disposed to observe it. So here let our conversation end for the present; go and prepare whatever you think necessary; spare no expence; my purse shall with pleasure answer all your demands; in point of time you shall not be hurried; in a fortnight or three weeks I should imagine all your finery may be ready; as for more important matters, I shall take that trouble upon myself."

So saying, my dear Lady Sedley, he left me to reflect at leisure on this horrid, this cruel and truly mortifying business. And now my dear friend

friend tell me, advise me what I am to do. Marry that conceited insignificant coxcomb I cannot, and never will; how then am I to proceed in order to avoid it? this is a point on which I am utterly at a loss how to decide. I see too plainly my father's heart is set upon the match. Too well do I know his temper; he will not recede from the engagement he has made; and as for the creature destined to torment me, I have no hope, from him, because 'tis plain my fortune is his only inducement for consenting to it. What a wretch must he be! yet his conduct will be applauded by the fathers of both, while I am condemned merely for presuming

presuming to fancy it necessary one should at least have some little preference for the man one is to pass ones life with; but as I have already said, I will die—yes absolutely die, rather than give either my hand or heart to a being, who, 'tis as clear as the sun, cares no more for me than for any other woman of equal fortune; how indeed should he? Yet dying is no very pleasant remedy, my dear Lady Sedley; however I trust I shall not be driven to that wretched alternative: my father's wrath I expect; 'tis possible too he may use harsh measures to bring me to his purpose. I must endeavour to bear them the best way I can.

Thank

Thank heaven, he cannot compel me—we live in a land of liberty. Without my consent the marriage never can take place, and that I never will consent is no less certain. I trust I have a proper idea of a father's authority, not for worlds would I knowingly rebel against it; but surely, my dear Lady Sedley, it is not quite so unlimited as mine would persuade me, that I have no right to marry without his consent, tho' even to this I think there may be exceptionable cases; the consent of a parent *may* be withheld from mere caprice, from absolute tyranny; there are not wanting instances of it; would a son or daughter under such
circum-

circumstances be blameable for daring to disobey? surely not; an improper match I trust I never shall make, but no power on earth shall ever persuade me to marry a man for whom I do not at least feel some degree of partiality. But this Maynard! heaven defend me from ever being the wife of such an insignificant coxcomb! You may perhaps, my dear Lady Sedley, tell me I have too hastily formed an idea of his disposition: indeed I have not; 'tis wrote in legible characters in his every look and action. Amiable and engaging as his brother appears, I would not so decidedly pronounce him deserving all I think of him, as

I have done of the other; *I may be deceived*, though I think I am not; but as to the conceited wretch, born I fear to be my torment, I am positively certain I do him no injustice.

Adieu, my dearest friend; may you ever enjoy all the happiness you so justly merit. My compliments to Sir James.

Your's,

BELINDA MENNILL."

When Sir John made the appointment to dine with his friend, Edmond was not in town, but hoping to arrive the night before; his father,
elate

clate with the prospect of so fine a match for his favourite, after telling him of it, and saying every thing was finally settled, he desired he would take that opportunity to pay his respects to his sister elect. To this proposal he made no objections, and very cordially wished his brother joy on his approaching felicity.

“Thank you,” replied Charles, “for your good wishes. What portion of felicity may be allotted me I know not, but happy are they you know, Edmond, who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed. Matrimony I look upon to be a bitter pill at best, but [*in a half whisper,*] as my finances are a little de-

ranged at present, the damsel's fortune at least will be a convenient circumstance, however inconvenient I may find it to be fettered to herself. But thanks to our kind stars we have found means to abolish the old fashioned idea of "*'till death do us part;*" that was too bad. In those days a man must have been confoundedly fond of shackles before he could resolve to put them on, on such cursedly ridiculous terms, were the woman an angel."

"Upon my word," cried Edmond, "I never heard a more lover-like speech. If the lady's sentiments on the subject are equally modern, I think you bid fair to be as happy
a pair

a pair as can be desired. Pray, if I may ask, what kind of a being is this Miss Mennill, who is to have the enviable felicity of calling you lord and master?"

"What kind of being?" replied Charles; "O the Lord above and my provident father alone knows, for faith I never once thought of asking the question, though it was natural enough too. He told me her father and himself had made the bargain, that she was to have thirty thousand *down on the nail*, and as much more at the old fellow's death."

"You astonish me!" cried Edmond. "Is it possible matters have

actually gone so far, and you have not yet seen the lady?"

"Possible!" replied his brother; "why what is there extraordinary in that? She is a woman I suppose, and for a wife I would not give sixpence for the liberty to chuse from the whole sex. Take my word for it my sober brother that once married they are all alike."

"Yet you modern beaux, Charles, find charms now and then in the wives of your friends. How is this to be accounted for on your principles?"

"Oh that is quite another affair," answered Charles; another man's wife may have more charms in my eyes than
than

than she had while single. I could give you a thousand excellent reasons for this; but you are such a queer, sentimental, insensible fellow, that I doubt whether they would appear satisfactory."

"Why to tell you the truth," replied Edmond, "I have my doubts on the subject. With these very refined notions," continued he, "I suppose you would think it a mark of vulgarity to blame a man who might chance to discover charms in your's?"

"Oh! the greatest bore in nature!" cried he; "that kind of polite intercourse is perfectly understood amongst people of a certain rank.

But for this, matrimony would be the very d——l."

"Well, Charles," said Edmond, smiling, "if you are not at least tolerably easy in that state, I must do you the justice to say 'twill be no fault of your's; so you really would persuade me you do not care sixpence whether she is young, handsome, old or ugly."

"Not a doit, by Jupiter," cried the bridegroom; "if the latter, you know, Edmond, I may chance to have the *singular* satisfaction of having her all to myself."

It may not be amiss to observe to my readers, that Sir John was not present at this conversation between

tween his sons, tho' I believe I may venture to add, if he had, it would only have served to confirm him in the opinion that Charles was beyond all dispute a compleat fine gentleman—a character for which he had the highest veneration.

The hour of the important visit being arrived, they, as we have already said, made their appearance at Mr. Mennill's. What impression her guests made upon Miss Mennill, we have already mentioned; what effects her charms produced on them, remains to be told.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT idea Charles had formed of her, or whether he had given himself the trouble to form any, is uncertain; but 'tis most certain he no sooner beheld her than his heart confessed her the most striking object he had yet met with. He gazed on her with rapture, and most fervently wished to call her his own on any terms except matrimony. All lovely as she appeared to him, her beauty had not power to conquer his aversion to that gothic

this institution; yet before the visit was at an end, he found she had taken such hold of his heart, that sensible there were no hopes of obtaining her on more fashionable terms, he with less reluctance than he believed possible, determined to submit to his fate with a good grace; nor could any lover be more truly impatient for the happy day, on which he was to be put in possession of so inestimable a prize, than he now was.

Miss Menhill was therefore greatly mistaken in fancying he beheld her with indifference; no man could be more sensible of her attractions; but many I, trust would have been able to convince

convince her of it in a more delicate, a more engaging manner; he had till now been but little accustomed to the company of virtuous women, nor was he I fear perfectly convinced that any such existed; neither will I venture to say the passion he now felt for the lovely Belinda, deserved the name of love. Be that as it will, it was of a nature to make him determine not only to possess her fortune, for which he had great occasion, but also her person, which having now seen, he was tempted to fancy the latter nearly as necessary to his happiness as the former; tho' till he beheld Miss Mennill, he had
made

made few distinctions, one fair female being in his estimation just as desirable as another.

Such was the state of *his* mind after this important interview; that of his brother was in some respects similar to it: he went to Mr. Men-
nill's fully persuaded that his daughter was irrevocably engaged to Charles. Sir John, from what motives is uncertain, had taken every means to convince him it was really so; perhaps, as he could not decently decline asking Edmond to be of the party, and conscious that he was not an object likely to be seen by any young lady whose heart was not prepossessed in favour of
another

another with indifference, he might assert it more strongly, to prevent as far as possible any attempts on his side to render himself agreeable to her; for in spite of his great and unjustifiable partiality for Charles, he could not but know it was amply in his power to prove himself a very formidable rival. Thus firmly persuaded every thing was settled for his brother's marriage, he accompanied them with no other view than as his father said, to pay his respects to a lady who was so soon to become one of the family. His first reflection on being informed of it was, that he thought it no great proof of his father's attention to him

him that he had not been acquainted with an event of that interesting nature: nay he very justly concluded had he not by accident come to town as he did, twas more than probable he might have known nothing of the matter till it was over. However, on finding Charles had not even at that time seen her himself, he without any great effort reconciled himself to this apparent neglect.

His idea of Miss Mennill was such as to prevent any feelings of envy at his brother's good fortune had he been capable of entertaining so malignant a passion; he concluded she must be absolutely void of every
pretension

pretension to that delicacy so essentially necessary to compleat the character of an amiable woman, since she could thus consent to give her hand, (as he believed she had done) to a man she had never seen: 'twas evidently a match of interest, and conveniency on all sides. Not indeed *singular* on that account in these days, but so utterly contrary to his notions of propriety, or possibility of happiness, that tho' he was determined to pay her, when she became his sister, a proper respect as such, he was perfectly convinced to esteem her would be out of his power. Thus prepossessed he entered Mr. Mennill's drawing room;

room; but had not been there many minutes before a strange revolution had taken place in his mind; he beheld her lovely beyond any idea he had yet formed of feminine beauty; he gazed on her with delight, but sighed to think so much sweetness, such uncommon grace and elegance, should be thrown away upon a mind so depraved, so destitute of tenderness, and all the finer feelings of the heart. Again he fixed his enquiring eyes upon her, and again he sighed. Her behaviour through the day puzzled him; he made not a doubt, but she knew Charles was the man to whom she was to give her hand; he had been assured

assured every thing was settled, of course her consent obtained. He was curious to see how a young lady would receive a first visit from her lover thus circumstanced. Her manner utterly astonished him. No embarrassment, no appearance of emotion when he was presented to her; she paid even less attention to his brother than to any other of the company; she seemed to study only how to render herself agreeable to all her guests, and succeeded to the utmost degree.

What could he think, but that amiable and captivatingly lovely as she appeared she was wholly destitute of sensibility. His brother's bold
and

and confident manner was in his opinion more likely to disgust than please a woman of sentiment; yet nothing of this appeared in her conduct towards him. 'Tis true he observed no symptoms of pleasure in her countenance when he addressed her; she listened to the compliments he every moment paid her with apparent indifference; indeed had Edmond had the smallest spark of vanity in his composition, he could not but have seen that the few words addressed to her by himself seemed to give her more satisfaction than all his brother's florid speeches. But as I have already observed, he came prepossessed; all he saw served only

to confound his judgment; he could make nothing of it; the whole was a scene so new, so foreign to his ideas, that he endeavoured to look upon it with an eye of indifference, as a matter in which he had very little or no concern. Yet this he found impossible, in spite of all the defects he was compelled from appearances to ascribe to her; her charms—her engaging manners had made so deep an impression on his heart, that all the fortitude he was master of could not preserve him from the irresistible power of her attractions. He condemned himself for his feelings on every account: was she not, he thought, irrevocably engaged

engaged to his brother; and had he not a thousand reasons to believe her unworthy the attachment of a man of worth. With reflections of this nature he took his leave. In the moment of parting he felt a rising sigh, and his eyes with reluctance turned from an object too lovely for his peace.

"Well Edmond," said Sir John, as soon as they were seated in his carriage, "what say you to the sister we are going to give you?"

"She is a lovely woman," replied Edmond, glad that the darkness of the night prevented their observing the emotions this unexpected question gave rise to in his breast.

"Why

"Why what an inanimate being art thou!" cried Charles, "thus with the cool composure of a Stoic merely to pronounce her lovely. By heavens she is an angel! She has more beauty, more attractions in one glance of her bewitching eye than all the rest of her enchanting sex put together!"

"Well done Charles!" said Sir John; "that is talking like a lover; and 'tis such spirited fellows as you only who deserve to possess so much beauty: it would be thrown away upon such a cold-hearted philosopher as Edmond. I'll be sworn he does not at this moment know the colour of them."

"It might have been attended
with

with danger perhaps, cold as I am," replied Edmond, "had I too minutely examined them. See the effect it has produced on my brother: he I suppose for the future will be blind to the charms of every mortal woman, having thus by chance found an angel."

"Oh I understand your *fly by chance*, my good brother," cried Charles. 'Tis thus, you see, that sons are rewarded who pay a proper regard to the judgment of their fathers. You, I suppose will think it necessary to look out for yourself; but you'll have devilish good luck if with all your methodical old fashioned notions

you

you stumble upon such another: for
O!" continued he,

*"She is more than painting can express,
"Or youthful poets fancy when they love!"*

if ever they *do* love, by the bye, which
I very much doubt; for you, Edmond,
are a poet I think, and can *write*
upon the subject to a miracle, but to
feel as I do the unspeakable delight
of loving and being beloved by so
adorable a creature—no, no, that is
utterly out of your sober line. But
my good sir," cried he, turning to
Sir John, "when shall I be put in
possession of my divinity?—when
shall I have the joy to call the dear
creature mine? Edmond, you'll have
the

the civility to go with us to St. George's? you have no objections, I trust, to go to church for once in a way to witness a brother's felicity; though 'tis a cursed bore after all; but no matter, a fine girl, and thirty thousand pounds, my boy, will make the pill, bitter as it is, go down as glibly as a glass of jelly."

"Why," replied Sir John, highly delighted with his son's rapturous exclamations and lively sallies, "if your mistress is but half as impatient as yourself, I see no occasion for fruitless delays; that is all that's wanting; her father and I have taken care to settle all other matters perfectly to our satisfaction. So you have only

now to prevail upon her to name her day."

"O as to her impatience," answered Charles, "that we must take for granted. 'Tis a circumstance the dear creatures are rather shy of confessing, you know; but let me alone, I understand every turn of their eye to a tittle, and if I do not mistake, my fair one will not be very cruel."

At this moment the carriage stopped at Sir John's door, and they soon after parted for the night—Charles, to dream of joys he was not so soon to taste as he fondly imagined; and Edmond, to regret that so much beauty and sweetness should be thrown away on hearts so insensible as her's and

and his brother's. In vain he endeavoured to compose himself to rest: the lovely Belinda's image would in spite of all his efforts to think of her, not only with indifference, but as the woman destined to be the wife of his brother, still keep possession of his thoughts. At some moments he wished to persuade himself, however she might hitherto have acquiesced in the will of her father, and have consented to see the man of his choice, yet it was possible, having now seen him, she might not approve: if she was the kind of woman her countenance, her manner, and every word she uttered, spoke her to be, she could not, it was

utterly impossible she *could* approve. "True," thought poor Edmond, "she knows not Charles's character so well as I do. He is handsome; he has all the coxcomical airs and graces of a modern fine gentleman; and how very very few females in these our days of folly and dissipation look for more." He now could not forbear execrating the fashionable mode of education; firmly persuaded but for that unfortunate system the too charming Belinda must have been no less lovely in mind than person.

After passing an almost sleepless night in these kind of distressing reflections, he rose the next morning determined to forget her; convinced

it

it was madness to indulge a passion from which, were he even assured beyond a doubt he had mistaken her character and that she was all his heart could wish, must, as things were circumstanced, be productive of misery. His principal business in town was to settle some affair relative to the estate left him by his uncle; and to see his father, whom he had not seen for some time, having been engaged in arranging matters at his house in the country which belonged to the estate, and where indeed he had chiefly resided, having from his infancy been a favourite with his generous friend and relation. He meant, indeed, to have spent a few

days in London; but the events of the last had produced such a revolution in his heart, that he felt it absolutely necessary to his peace to fly from temptation. He hoped the wound was not so deep but absence, and a change of scene, would effect his cure. Myrtle Grove, the name given by his uncle to his seat, from the circumstance of his being particularly fond of that elegant exotic, and having bestowed unwearied pains in the cultivation of it, justly deserved the appellation, since it was confessed by all who were acquainted with it to be one of the most romantic and beautiful situations in England. A profusion of wood and water, both suffered

suffered to take their natural course, rendered it a most desirable retreat. Here it was that Edmond resolved to conquer a growing passion, from the indulgence of which he could promise himself no possible happiness. In the morning he made a pretence of business to his father and the enraptur'd Charles for leaving them so soon, but hoped to receive a summons to attend the latter to St. George's before it was long. This was promised, though perhaps no more intended than Edmond intended to accept the invitation. Having with no great appetite got over the ceremony of the breakfast table, he ordered his post chaise, and with-

ing his brother every possible felicity, he set off for his seat in the country.

Charles, impatient for the hour in which he could with propriety pay a second visit to his fair enslaver, went to his toilet, and having decorated his person *aux dernier gout*, set off for Portland Place, where he had the good fortune to find Miss Mennill alone.

With a confident air without a doubt of success he entered the room—"Ah," cried he, approaching to take her hand, "by heavens, my charming Miss Mennill, I find you more lovely, more irresistible this morning if possible than when
I had

"I had lost the honor of paying my devoirs. What a bloom—what eyes, and this dear snowy hand too,"—attempting to seize it—"how divine! Tell me, my enchanting creature, when shall I have the supreme felicity of calling it mine?"

Astonished, and disgusted to the last degree by his impertinent familiarity, Belinda drew back.

"Upon my word, Mr. Maynard, I am so total a stranger to all this modish jargon," said she with a look that had he not been dead to every feeling of delicacy must have petrified him, "that I really have not the honor to comprehend one syllable of it."

“Not comprehend,” cried he, again making an attempt on her withheld hand; “how, my dear creature! with that angelic countenance can you affect this cruel coldness? Surely you cannot but know I adore you, that your charms have done what the charms of your whole sex have hitherto been unable to do, you have made me your willing slave, you have reconciled me, nay have made me impatient to enter into a state, which, until I beheld your all conquering beauty, I looked upon as the greatest bore in nature. Judge then of the fervor of my passion, and the power

of

of your charms by the miracle it has wrought."

Then falling on his knees at her feet, while she with the utmost difficulty could keep her gravity, tho' horribly vexed to find herself subjected to hear such a string of unmeaning nonsense, he implored her to put an end to his torment by naming an early day to make him the happiest of men.

"Really, Mr. Maynard," replied Miss Mennill, "you ascribe infinitely more power to me than I have any pretensions to; what the torments may be, which you mention, I know not; severe they cannot be, I think I may venture to declare,

declare, since I never yet saw a gentleman more at his ease; and as for naming a day in order to make you happy, surely 'tis of all possible things the least necessary since a man so perfectly satisfied with himself cannot be otherwise."

"Oh spare me, spare me, my dear Miss Mennill," cried he, rising from his humble posture, finding she seemed mighty indifferent whether he knelt or not; "there wanted not this display of your wit and charming vivacity to compleat your conquest. Even before I beheld your matchless perfections, I felt that my future peace depended on your smiles."

"This,

“This, I must confess,” replied Belinda, “is going one step at least beyond the common run of compliments, and it would be ungenerous to pass it by unnoticed; to *fall in love* without seeing the object of your passion was a stroke reserved for you alone; pray may I ask how the symptoms first shewed themselves, or shall I attempt to guess; you heard I presume, Mr. Maynard, that my father *could*, should you be so fortunate as to make him inclined, give me a more than barely tolerable fortune. This naturally led you to believe I possessed every perfection necessary to render the married state, if not compleatly happy according

according to the old exploded idea of happiness, at least perfectly ~~for~~ according to that of the present age; and you, like a very prudent, a very sensible young man, instantly *fell in love*. All I have to lament is, Mr. Maynard, that, however highly exaggerated the accounts I have heard of your perfections may have been, they did not by some unlucky means or other produce the same effects on me; I did not fall in love; I own 'tis a pity, a very great pity, but what can a poor girl do in these cases?"

Charles bit his lips, and looked rather foolish, not exactly knowing whether to laugh or cry as he
saying

saying is, when just at that critical moment the door opened, and in came Mr. Mennill. What a relief. With such a second he did not fear to renew the attack; nay he begun to believe the share Belinda had had in the above dialogue was uttered with no other view than really and truly to give him a specimen of her talents for agreeable railery; self love preserved him from the mortification of fancying it possible she could resist his attractions for any considerable time, supposing, as she said, she had not yet fallen in love with them, of the truth of which he had his doubts, for his glass had that very morning assured him

him. Charles Maynard was by no means the kind of being to be looked upon with indifference.

“ Well, Mr. Maynard,” said her father as he entered; “ what says my daughter, is every thing settled between you? have you taken the measure of her finger? ha! I am for dispatching business out of hand; Life is too short, and time too precious, to be wasted in long courtship. Leave that to amuse you when you have nothing better to do.”

“ Your daughter,” replied Charles, “ is an angel; her wit, her charming vivacity has compleated the conquest, her beauty begun. It only remains with you, my dear Sir, to
name

name the day on which I am to be made the happiest of men."

"Pray, Mr. Maynard," cried Belinda alarmed at this proof of his confidence, and terrified lest her father should really imagine she had given him encouragement, "permit me to speak *my* sentiments as freely as you have spoken yours. Forgive me, my dear Sir," turning to Mr. Mennill, "if I take the liberty to say Mr. Maynard has grossly deceived himself if he fancies from any thing I have said, since I have had the honor of his company, he is authorized to draw such a conclusion, I am an utter stranger to him. Till yesterday I never had the honor

honor of seeing him: *he may* have all the good qualities that ever man possessed; but surely I can be no judge whether he really does possess them; indeed were I to draw any conclusion from what I have seen of him this morning, it would be such——”

“As it ought,” cried her father, interrupting her with no very pleasant accent. “I have already told you, daughter, I do not expect, nay I will not give you the trouble to form any judgment on the subject. Suffice it to say, this gentleman has done you the honor to ask your hand, I have, on mature reflection, found it such a request as I think
you

you ought to comply with; but as girls do not always know what is most likely to be productive of their own happiness, I take upon myself to say you *shall*; so no more of your silly objections; make up your mind therefore to insure your future felicity with a good grace, Belinda, and let me have no trifling. Mr. Maynard," continued he, taking his daughter's hand and giving it to him, "receive this as your own, depend upon it it shall be such in a very few days."

Charles bent his knee, and putting her hand to his lips, declared he had by the precious gift of so inestimable a blessing, made him the happiest

happiest of mortals. Belinda, shocked beyond expression to find her father capable of such tyranny, was so wholly overcome by it that she burst into tears in spite of all her efforts to restrain them; her spirits were quite exhausted; for though sensible he had formed the design of making this detested match, yet she had no idea he would thus cruelly attempt to force her inclinations. How then must she be surprised and distressed on hearing his promise thus given even in her presence. Observing her tears, he flew into a rage of passion, and in spite of Charles's attempts to calm the tempest his trembling daughter had innocently raised in his bosom.

bosom, he sternly ordered her to leave the room, nor presume to appear in his presence again till she had learnt what was due to the authority of a parent.

Most gladly she obeyed; and flinging herself on a chair as soon as she reached her own apartment, she blamed herself for her ridiculous behaviour, and wished the mortifying scene was yet to begin, that she might convince them she was not the same, ignorant, timid being they no doubt now believed her, which would persuade them they had only to intimidate, in order to bring her to their purpose. If this was their opinion, she was determined they should

should find themselves exceedingly deceived——for if she conceived no very favourable impression of him the first time she saw him, we may easily guess the second interview did not set his merits in a more pleasing point of view. She now looked upon him not merely as a conceited coxcomb, but as a most despicable wretch, who for the sake of interest would not scruple to marry his great grandmother were it not fortunately forbid; that no power on earth should compel her to marry him, she positively, and no less positively, and freely did she determine to tell her father so when next they met. She had no sooner left the room than

than Charles poured forth a profusion of grateful acknowledgments for the honor and happiness Mr. Mennill had so generously promised him, swearing it should be the future study of his life to prove he was not wholly unworthy the partiality he now entertained for him. He now expressed some apprehensions lest Miss Mennill's affections should be engaged to some more fortunate man than himself, as she had not received her father's commands in regard to him in quite so flattering a manner as he had presumed to hope she would.

"All trick, all female perverseness,"

nels," cried Mr. Mennill; "I know the sex better than you do, young man; did you then expect she was to fly into your arms at first bidding; had I indeed *forbid* her to do it, tis hard to say what might have happened; but make yourself easy, you have my promise she shall be yours, and that too before 'tis long. I will let her know who is master here; she has filled her head with romances, and thinks it necessary I suppose, in order to become the heroine of one herself, to rebel against the will of her father; this comes of encouraging circulating libraries; but I'll take care she shall

shall be concerned in no very extraordinary adventures; her's at least shall begin with matrimony, where others generally leave off, so Mr. Maynard, you may depend on her being ready to accompany you to church in less than a week, willing or unwilling."

With this flattering promise, Charles now took his leave, after asking permission to wait upon him again the next day, when he hoped, by his obliging endeavours, to find his charming daughter disposed to give him a more favourable reception.

CHAPTER V.

HE was no sooner gone than Mr. Mennill rung the bell, and ordered a servant to send Willson to him immediately: She, on entering the room, instantly perceived her master was in no very placid humour, and therefore composed her features accordingly.

“Come hither, Willson,” said he, “and tell me honestly whether to your knowledge my daughter

ter has had the presumption to form an attachment without my consent? has she given encouragement to any of the fellows she has hitherto met with, I mean?"

"Lord, Sir," replied Willson, "how should I possibly know. I am not honored with Miss Men-
nill's confidence I'm sure, and scorn to pry into the secrets of any body."

"I desire," said her master, "you will scorn it no longer. You have now my orders for being a little more inquisitive; no very hard or disagreeable task for a female."

"Thank you, Sir," said Willson

with a curtsy, and one of her arch looks, the force of which she well knew.

“Look ye, Willson,” continued he, “I have a match in view for my daughter, nay more than in view, for every thing is settled; ’tis such as she can have no *reasonable* objections to; a fine young fellow, heir to a title and good estate; yet the perverse baggage has had the assurance to make objections, of course *unreasonable* ones; now they can only arise from her being prepossessed in favour of another; but be he who or what he will, I am no less prepossessed against *him*, because

cause my word and promise is given to the man of my choice. What I want you to do is to sift her, to watch her, to observe whether she sends or receives any letters, and above all to persuade her to comply with my will, without compelling me to use means which she may probably deem harsh, for such I certainly shall have recourse to should she dare to persist in her disobedience; my word shall not be broken merely to gratify her whims; my honor is too far engaged for that. Do you comprehend me?" added he.

"Oh perfectly Sir," replied

G 3

Willson,

Willson, smiling, and not a little delighted with her new employment, "I understand your honour to a tittle; let me alone for seeing as far into a young lady's mind as any *she* in the three kingdoms."

"Very well," replied Mr. Men-
nill, "set about it then without
loss of time. Belinda is now in
her own apartment, where I have
ordered her to remain 'till she is
disposed to obey my commands
like a dutiful daughter as she
ought; I shall dine out to-day that
she may have the more time for
serious reflections; give her to un-
derstand that I expect to find her

at breakfast to-morrow morning in the disposition I wish."

Having given these directions, (and 'tis said, how true I know not) also a *chaste* salute to the smirking Mrs. Willson, he took his hat and cane and walked out.

This additional proof of his confidence in her, gave her no small pleasure; she had 'tis true, even before this event been conscious of some ambitious ideas.

Masters had ere now raised servants from their humble state. Love was a great leveller; who knows what may happen, thought Willson, eying herself in the glass and adjusting a straggling curl,

(for all ranks of females now find curls essentially necessary to their happiness) who knows what may happen were Miss Mennill but fairly disposed of?

This idea gave rise to many others no less flattering, and determined her to use her utmost endeavours to forward so desirable an event. Never was mortal so impatient to hear the *bell for church* as she was to hear that of her young lady's: she listened with far more than her usual attention, and when beginning to despair of ever hearing it more, the joyful sound now reached her delighted

lighted ear. Up she flew with surprising alacrity.

"Is your master at home?" said Belinda as she leaned on the desk on which she had been writing.

"No, Madam," said Willson, "he is this moment gone out."

"Does he dine at home?"

"No, Madam."

"Oh then 'tis time enough. I meant to have sent this letter to him by you, but tis no matter."

"Would you have it sent to him?" said Willson, very unwilling to be so soon dismissed.

"Why, do you then know where to find him?" cried Belinda.

"Dear me," replied the fly

housekeeper, "how could I be so silly. No, indeed, I quite forgot that circumstance in my hurry to oblige you as far as possible; tis for my master is it madam?"

"Yes. I thought you understood me before," answered Miss Mennill.

"Very true," said Willson; "all I meant, Madam, was that had it been for any body else I should have been just as ready to take charge of it."

"Oh you are vastly kind," replied her young lady; "but I have no other business to trouble you with at present, so you may go."

Poor

Poor Willson left the room without having had courage to enter on the subject nearest her heart. There was a something in Miss Mennill's manner, tho' ever truly condescending and obliging, that forbad all improper familiarity; yet if any mortal could have conquered this difficulty, it must have been Willson, who was blessed with as decent a portion of assurance as any person could reasonably desire; it failed her, however, on this occasion, nor could she find any pretence to see her lady again that day. The letter mentioned above was as follows:

"I have

“ I have your orders not to appear in your presence, my dear Sir, till I am become sensible what is due to the authority of a parent. Sorry, most truly sorry, am I to find you think I have given you cause to believe me ignorant of it. I hope I am not: and that on cool reflection my dear and ever honored father will do me the justice to believe the reluctance I ventured to shew to a compliance with his will, in an affair on which surely the future happiness or misery of my life wholly depends, did not, as you unkindly supposed, proceed from perverseness, but from a firm

firm persuasion, that as the wife of Mr. Maynard I must be completely wretched.

“ Ah, Sir! is it possible that prejudice can so far blind you, as to fancy your Belinda could behold, with any degree of preference, so finished a coxcomb, so trifling, so very insignificant a being. All this he is, I will venture to pronounce; and I wish, Sir, you may not one day or other find even these epithets the least exceptionable part of his character.

“ Pardon my presuming to write thus freely of a person so highly favoured by you. As some atonement,

ment, permit me now to give you my solemn, my most sacred promise, that if you will so far indulge me as to suffer me to reject Mr. Maynard, I will never on any consideration marry any man who has not your approbation; nay on that condition I would, did you, my dear Sir, desire it, I would freely promise to live single, since I am fully persuaded that state would be infinitely preferable, infinitely more conducive to my happiness than spending my days with a man I can neither esteem nor love.

“How far a parent’s authority extends, I presume not to decide;
but

but am perfectly sure, from your
past indulgence to your Belinda,
I have nothing to fear from it.
In this happy persuasion, permit
me, my dear Sir, to subscribe
myself

your ever truly affectionate,

and obedient daughter,

BELINDA MENNILL.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS Mennill finding there was no chance of having her letter delivered till next morning, as her father very rarely passed his evenings at home, and not being in a disposition either for work, reading, or her harp, on which instrument she was a great proficient, she resumed her seat at her desk, and wrote as follows to her friend Lady Sedley:

“ Behold,

“ Behold your poor Belinda, my dear Lady Sedley, a prisoner; yes, she is now by the command of her father confined to her apartment till she can bring her mind to look with as favourable an eye upon that conceited puppy Maynard as he does—need I add, my dear friend, if my restoration to freedom is to depend upon that event, ’tis time I were beginning to reconcile myself to my present situation, for never, never can I quit it on that condition. His first visit made so deep an impression on me, that a second was perfectly unnecessary. I have however been favoured with a second,

not-

notwithstanding: O that you, my dear Lady Sedley, had been a witness to the scene! To give you even a faint idea of his impertinence, his conceited familiarity, is impossible; but I will attempt it.

“The creature came fully persuaded he had only to come, to see, and conquer, and next to do me the honor to ask on what day I would make him the happiest of men;—only his second visit observe;—yet had he the unparalleled assurance to press for even an early one: I say to give you an idea of it is impossible. Not dreaming that my father could on a further knowledge
of

of such an animal seriously think of encouraging his impertinent hopes, I took the liberty to treat him as he deserved, that is to say with infinite contempt. But this he had not the sense to discover, taking all I said as proofs of my wit and vivacity. Silly soul!

“Is it not cruel, my dear friend, that I should be thus tormented on the account of such a wretch? yet so it is; and by my infatuated father's harsh proceedings even in this early stage of the horrid business, what may I not expect when he finds I am determined to assert my claim to the liberty of a free-born English woman. I inclose
the

the copy of a few lines I have just wrote to him in hopes of making my peace; how far I shall succeed heaven only knows. That his temper is obstinate, you, my dear Lady Sedley know full well, and I now begin to find to my cost that his notions of fatherly authority are carried somewhat farther than I can readily believe justifiable. But will he take my word for that? I fear not, supposing I durst give him a civil hint that I thought so.

“Do I beseech you, my amiable friend, write and tell me what you would advise me to do should my father really proceed to extremities?

ties? I am not fond of playing the heroine, nay I should even dread the thoughts of becoming the town talk; yet how am I to avoid it if I have no alternative but either to give my hand to a creature I absolutely detest, or to follow the example of those unfortunate Misses we read of in the same situations. Bad, very bad as the latter undoubtedly is, yet I fear I must adopt it if the very worst happens. It cannot be said I fly from a rejected to a favoured one. To whom then do I mean to fly, your Ladyship I hope will ask? because in that case may I take the liberty to
answer

answer—to yourself. Will you, my dear friend, condescend to receive the poor fugitive should she be compelled to take a step of that desperate nature? if not, I must submit to the fate allotted me; for however great my courage may be, I feel I should not have a sufficient share to set off at a venture.

“ To make this request was the *chief* motive for my writing at present. 'Tis prudent to look forward to what may happen. I beg, my dear Lady Sedley, you will set my agitated heart at rest in regard to this point. When secure of an asylum with you till the

the storm is blown over, my mind will be more at ease. Your ladyship is at liberty to read this to Sir James. He, I am well assured will make no objections to any act of kindness his Harriot may propose.

“ Ah! what an idea must the amiable Edmond have formed of me if he believes I could voluntarily give my hand to a creature so perfectly the reverse of himself? Astonishing! that two brothers should be so totally different! 'tis true I know but little of either, yet too much of one of them for my peace, nay perhaps of both: for I will to you
my

my dear friend confess, the engaging, gentle Edmond's image is deeply imprinted on my imagination at least, if not on my foolish heart. 'Tis astonishing to me that my father, knowing both as he no doubt does, should give the preference to—— But I forget the too charming Edmond is not the heir: that is a flaw in his character there is no getting over. I wish I knew what he thought of——

“ But how ridiculous! Adieu my ever dear Lady Sedley! I would gladly believe I shall not have occasion to put your valued friendship to so severe a test as asking

asking you to receive a runaway daughter. My affairs I hope will take a more favourable turn. Let me have the pleasure of hearing from you the first leisure hour, and believe me ever

Most truly your's,

BELINDA MENNILL.

Willson, eager to be engaged in a business so fitted to her talents, went next morning earlier than usual to Miss Mennill's apartment to receive her orders for the day. The first was, that she

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H

would

would give the letter to her master with Belinda's duty. Gladly would the inquisitive dame have known it's contents; but this was out of her power without a breach of trust for which the temptation on this occasion was not quite sufficient. She took it with an air of the utmost respect, and immediately flew with it to the breakfast parlour, where Mr. Mennill still was.

"A letter for you, Sir," said she.

"For me," said he; "from whom, pray, that you should be the bearer?"

"From

"From Miss Mennill," replied Willson.

He took it; and having cast his eyes over the contents, the sagacious emissary soon perceived it gave him no great satisfaction. He threw it on the table, exclaiming "Sure a man needs be plagued with no greater curse than an obstinate daughter. What would the girl be at? But no matter what; she shall never persuade me that some other lover is not at the bottom of all this. By heavens if I knew where to find him I would put an effectual end to his impertinent hopes. But find him or not an end shall be put to them,

H 2

them, and that too without farther delay. Here she tells me, by way of showing her humility truly I suppose, that she will not presume to decide how far the authority of a father extends. If she either cannot, or will not, I will make the point perfectly clear to her, that she may depend upon. Don't attempt to deceive me Willson," continued he; "you certainly have it in your power to tell me whether she has an attachment for any other. Let me have no prevarication: tell me plainly, do you, or do you not believe she has?"

Willson

Willson judging it the readiest way to make herself of importance in this affair to pretend a knowledge of her lady's secrets, after an affected pause, and appearance of reluctance to betray them, at last confessed she believed his honor's conjecture was but too well founded. 'Twas she found in vain to attempt deceiving a person so clear sighted as his honor. She had long feared what would be the end of it; she had often and often taken the liberty to hint to her young lady that such underhand doings as a body might say could come to no good. But what signified the advice of a poor

faithful servant; young madam had been shy to her ever since."

"So so," cried Mr. Mennill in a rage; "fine doings indeed! O mighty well, my pretty dear; you would live single truly rather than take the man recommended by your father, would you? Yes, yes, I'll be sworn would you, but no longer than till you could contrive ways and means to get into the hands of him you have thought proper to chuse for yourself. But by all that's honest I'll have the start of the fellow be he whom he will. He shall never make a fool of me, whatever he may make

make of Maynard; let him when she is once his own see to that."

"And is it Mr. Maynard, that handsome, proper gentleman who was here yesterday, Miss Belinda talks of with such contempt? Is it him your honor wishes her to marry?"

"Him, why to be sure it is," replied her master; who the devil else should it be?"

"Well," cried she, "I stand amazed! Why as you say Sir, it must, it can be nothing but downright perverseness and contradiction to be sure. Well, all I have to say is, that if what I have been told is true, the young man she

is dying for, as one may say, is no more to be compared to Mr. Maynard than Sir John is to your honor: for I had a peep at them all as they came out of their carriage the day they dined here. There were two of his sons I think; pray may I be so bold as to ask which of them was it that your honor is so taken with?"

"Which?" cried Mr. Menmill, a pretty question truly; "why the eldest to be sure."

"Aye certainly," replied Willson; "one would hardly give such a fortune as Miss Belinda will have to a younger brother. That was the 'squire in blue, was

it

it not, Sir? never did I set eyes on so sweet a looking gentleman."

Then you never set your eyes on the other," said her master, or you would not have made so foolish a speech. Blue, indeed—no, the squire, as you call him, was in scarlet, and as far superior to that sneaking, sober fellow, as a good guinea is to a Birmingham farthing."

Here Mrs. Willson found herself on the wrong side of the post, but soon recovered that false step by crying, "Lord bless me, 'tis scarlet I mean. Well might your honour call me foolish indeed. I wonder what I was

H 5

thinking

thinking of. The gentleman in blue, though a pretty enough looking young fellow, to be sure was not to compare with the other: no life, no spirit in his appearance. Indeed I said then to John, who let them in, says I—"him in scarlet for my money" when he asked me how I liked our new visitors."

The wily dame now fearing she might get into another blunder, asked by way of changing the discourse, "whether he would have her call Miss Mennill down, or whether his honor would write her an answer."

This question, though a natural one, puzzled him. He paused a few

few moments, unable readily to determine, but at last bid her send her mistress down.

Belinda, delighted, had not a doubt but her letter had produced the desired effect, little dreaming an enemy had stepped in and added fuel to the flame already kindled in the breast of her father. I need hardly tell my readers this enemy was Willson, of whose talents for invention they have just had a pretty tolerable specimen. Judge then how she was shocked at the cruel reception she met with on appearing before him.

“So, so, madam,” cried he as she

she entered, 'tis no wonder the man of my choice found no favour in your sight; you were, I find, in too great an hurry to wait, and had provided one for yourself. Terrified beyond expression at the fury in his looks, she was going to clear herself from an accusation so perfectly groundless, when he stopped her by insisting upon knowing who the rascal was who had thus taught her to despise his commands. In vain she protested, in vain she wept. He would listen to nothing but a confession of what she was in fact wholly innocent. Having never

never seen him thus enraged before, all her boasted courage forsook her, and tears were the only answer she had power to give to the questions he asked her.

Not having a doubt of Willson's veracity, the vile insinuations she had thrown out agreeing but too well with his own conjectures, he now with a thousand oaths swore she should marry Maynard within two days, or go penniless to the scoundrel for whose cursed sake she thus forgot the duty and affection due to her father. So saying, he again sent her weeping to her apartment, repeating as she

went

went his orders that she should prepare herself to attend him to church on Thursday morning, it being then Monday. To describe her feelings at that cruel moment is impossible: all hopes of happiness now were at an end; for granting she could avoid the threatened, justly dreaded marriage by flight, such were her sentiments that while under the displeasure of a father, happy she never could be. At some moments she was tempted by absolute despair to go down again and give her consent; no longer caring whether she was wretched or not:

but

But when she called to mind the being to whom she was thus to devote the rest of her days, her heart shrunk with horror from the thought. The amiable Edmond too, though she had no probable chance of ever seeing him more, would also obtrude himself on her imagination.

Thus distressed, and unable to resolve on any thing, she grew painfully impatient for an answer from Lady Sedley. But two days between her and certain misery! two short days! She hardly knew whether she most wished or dreaded their being over, that she might

might know her fate:—however dreadful, she thought it could not be more painful than her present suspense.

C H A P.

CHAPTER VII.

NEXT morning the earnestly wished for letter was brought her by her own maid; luckily no orders had yet been given to stop them, at least, to any person except Willson, nor indeed had she received any such explicitly; yet, 'tis most certain, her officious zeal would have led her to do it, had it fallen in her way. The contents, which were as follow, gave her the first gleam of

of comfort she had enjoyed since this affair had been in agitation.

“ Your letter, my dear Belinda, has exceedingly distressed me; do not mistake me, and for a moment fancy I am going to reject the flattering offer you have made us of putting yourself under our protection, in case there should be a necessity for your taking such a step; no my beloved girl, no. Be assured our hearts, as well as house, shall ever be open to receive so amiable a guest.

Make yourself easy then, my dear girl; and, if Mr. Mennill's unaccountable infatuation should really

really tempt him so far to forget the tenderness so justly due to you, fly to us, instantly fly, and be assured of the kindest reception.

Yet, that I may have nothing to reproach myself with, let me ask you, my love, are you, can you be quite certain that a farther acquaintance with this so highly favoured Maynard, might not reconcile you to him by discovering good qualities which you may hitherto have overlooked?

I think I see my Belinda turn up her pretty lip at this max-donly interrogation; but having
thus

thus done my duty, if your heart answers in the negative, and if you must either take him, or turn heroine, as you call it, pray of two evils let us chuse the least; leaving your father's house to fly to *mine* will surely be as faultless a step as the nature of your situation will admit of. They must be very rigid mortals indeed who would not hold it guiltless: nay I am persuaded, if upon mature reflection, with such a share of understanding and discernment as you are mistress of, you continue to think of him as you did at the moment you wrote the letter now before

before me, he must be not only unworthy of you, but your father's prejudice will also evaporate on a farther acquaintance with him, and all will again be well.

But this is not all I have to say to you, my dear Belinda, and what remains will, I hope, give you pleasure; Sir James is obliged to be in London to-morrow, where he has business which will probably detain him a week or a fortnight. I had not quite determined to accompany him 'till I received your letter, tho' we had talked of it: but I now am, not only that I may be near him,

him, but you also, in case of accidents.

Should you be obliged to escape from tyranny, it will be far easier for you, my dear, to reach Wimpole-street in safety, than Windsor, for I presume you will be obliged to come unattended to either.

Depend then on my being in town a very few hours after this letter; and if I can be of any possible service, you have only to command me; Sir James bids me say the same thing for him, a trouble I believe I might have spared myself, since you know the real regard he has for you.

Adieu!

Adieu! my dear suffering girl!
I trust all will yet be well. Will
you pardon my forgetting even
to mention your favorite Edmond.
I will not interrogate you again,
Belinda, or I might, you know,
ask how, on so short an acquaint-
ance, you could contrive to disco-
ver such perfections in him.

Because, answers my saucy friend,
they were fully as conspicuous
as his vile, impudent brother's
defects.

Farewell!

Your's ever.

HARRIOT SEDLEY.

This

This letter was indeed a cordial to the drooping spirits of poor Belinda, half her troubles at least seemed to vanish as she perused its friendly contents.

Why should I thus distress myself, thought she, why give way to despair? Surely duty cannot demand that I should become a voluntary sacrifice, merely to please the caprice of an unfeeling father—impossible—nor will I—'tis sufficient if I never marry without his consent. This I certainly will never do, at least *I think* I never will. Why then, by what law, human or divine, has my father a right to compell me to marry

marry a man I detest; no, I will fly to my amiable, my generous, kind friends. While under their protection, I need not fear the censure of the world. Thank heaven I have so eligible a resource. Away then with these horrid fears; I will weep no more, but with becoming fortitude await the hour that must decide whether I am or am not to accept their obliging invitation.

With her heart more at ease than when she last addressed him, she now again wrote to her father the most submissive letter any reasonable man could possibly desire, promising obedience

to all his commands, would he but permit her to reject Mr. Maynard. Willson was a second time sent down.

"What have we here," cried he, as she with simpering looks presented it to him: "I trust the young lady has found I am not a man to be trifled with, and is come to a proper way of thinking."

"I hope so, Sir," said Willson; "I am sure if she is not, she but ill deserves the blessing of so indulgent, so kind a father."

While she uttered this flattering speech, he was glancing his eye over the paper, but soon found

found he was disappointed in his expectations. With a look of indignation he threw it from him, and bidding her at her peril bring him any more such impertinent scrawls, ordered her to return and tell his daughter she had heard his last, his final determination, and had only to prepare herself accordingly.

Up went the self important Mrs. Willson, who delivered her message in due form. Belinda, during her absence, had been reflecting in what manner it would be wisest to behave, supposing this letter also failed in its purpose—a

little dissimulation appeared to her the best plan she could adopt.

"Well," said she, "all is over then, and I must I find submit to my fate."

"That's a dear good young lady," cried Willson, quite delighted to hear matters were likely to take so desirable a turn. "O how pleased will my master be, how happy will this submission make him, and you too, Miss; I am sure, yes perfectly sure, for a finer, handsomer, comlier gentleman than Mr. Maynard, I never set eyes on."

"I am glad," replied Miss Mennill, "my determination is likely

likely to give such general satisfaction; you may go," continued she, "I wish to have a little leisure to reflect on the important change that is so soon, so very soon to take place in my situation."

"Aye, no wonder, my dear young lady, no wonder. I have your permission then, have I not, to make my master quite easy."

"Oh by all means if you can," answered Miss Mennill; "it has ever been my first wish that he should be so."

Willson, with a triumphant smile on her ruddy countenance, curtsied, and flew to impart the

glad tidings to her master. Their joy was mutual, nor am I certain but they both at that happy moment had an eye to an event not unlikely to happen in consequence of this fortunate revolution.

Miss Meenill was now suffered to dine with her father, and all animosity seemed totally forgotten. He was kind; and she appeared, if not extravagantly happy, tolerably content.

Being fully determined to put herself under Lady Sedley's protection the next morning, her only wish now was that the day might pass without a visit from
her

her Timpertinent lover; but this was not to be; Mr. Mennill had instantly informed him Belinda's reluctance was vanished, and he hoped to see him that afternoon. He came early—how was she mortified to be thus obliged to hear all his insignificant, unmeaning speeches without a frown, or daring to rally him as she had formerly done.

The hours he staid appeared endless. She every moment peeped at her watch—she hinted having letters to write—orders to give—twas all in vain. He was in raptures now at her knees—now viewing his irresistible person in

the glass, swearing he was the happiest of mortals.

The most intolerably conceited you mean, thought Belinda.

At last she complained, and not without truth, of a violent head ach, and begged leave to retire. To this her father consented, but as she left the room, bid her with a smile remember Thursday morning.

Charles on his knees echoed the injunction: and, in spite of her efforts to prevent it, pressed her hand to his lips.

The two gentlemen now talked the matter over by themselves, and having settled every thing for the important

important hour, they parted for that day.

Mr. Mennill, however, met Sir John as usual at the coffee house, and there in high good humour talked it over once more with him. It was agreed the parties concerned were to meet in Portland Place on Thursday morning, and from thence proceed to church; wedding finery could be procured, they very wisely considered, just as well after the ceremony was over as before, for they had some reason to fear delays might be attended with danger.

Belinda was of the same opi-

nion, and therefore early next morning, having put up a few of her most valuable effects, she, before the prying Mrs. Willson had opened her sharp eyes, slipped out unperceived by any of the family, and getting into the first chair she met with, was safely conveyed to Sir James Sedley's in Wimpole-street.

So great were her agitations while pressed in the arms of her affectionate friend, that it was not without difficulty she could prevent her fainting. A glass of water however relieved her.

"Compose yourself, my dear creature," cried Lady Sedley, leading
ing

ing her to a sofa and seating herself by her; "you are now safe, my love; you have nothing farther to fear. I am sorry things are brought to this extremity; but do not, cannot blame my Belinda, nor will any reasonable, unprejudiced person, I am certain."

Miss Mennill now told her that the very next morning had been fixed on to make her a wretch for life—she had been compelled to deceive her father by letting him believe she would no longer persist in her disobedience; this she confessed hurt her feelings beyond expression; but what could she do—had she not given hopes
of

of this nature, was it not too probable she might have been so narrowly watched as to have put it out of her power to escape; "and then," added she, "what must have become of me. But I tremble lest my father," continued Miss Mennill, "should suspect I am here. What if he should come himself to enquire?"

"You forget, my dear," said Lady Sedley, "that he does not know we are in town; and I had the precaution before I left the country, to leave orders with my people, in case any enquiries should be made, to say we were gone to Scarborough; so all we have now

to do is to let as few of our friends as we can know we are here."

"How kind, how considerate have you been, my dear friend. I had indeed forgot that circumstance; but do for heaven's sake tell me, do you think my father will be inflexible? do you think he will? surely when convinced as he must be by the step I have taken, how unconquerable my repugnance was to the wretched match he had so unfortunately projected, he will forgive and take me again into favor."

"No doubt of it," replied her friend; "I cannot doubt it; but

we

we must have patience, we must give his passion time to subside. This is the first, the only fault he can accuse you of; and I think when he comes to reflect coolly on the subject, he will do you justice, and be sensible 'tis himself, not you, that is to blame for what has happened."

Sir James now joined them, and declared he was of his Harriot's opinion. Miss Mennill now began to acquire some degree of composure, and endeavoured to adopt the comforting sentiments of her friends, and being seated at the breakfast table, they laid down the best plan they could think

think of for keeping themselves concealed, but agreed, should Mr. Mennill discover their being in town, and make any enquiries, they would evade as far as possible giving him the information he desired.

In this situation let us leave the friendly party, and next see how matters went on in Portland Place.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILLson had orders from her master to have an elegant breakfast prepared for Thursday morning; his carriage to be ready, &c. He had invited a female friend to accompany his daughter to church, taking that trouble upon himself, pretty well convinced, that though Belinda had given her consent, she was not so delighted with the business as to have any farther hand

hand in it than was absolutely necessary.

Sir John and the exulting bridegroom promised to be with him early. Poor Edmond was forgot: no invitation, though promised, was sent to him. In fine, the important morning came. Willson had repeatedly tapped at her lady's door; but finding it locked, contrary to her usual custom, concluded she wished not to be hurried. I forgot to mention that circumstance at the proper moment. Belinda, when she left her apartment, had locked the door and put the key in her pocket: with what view is uncertain; but as in fact

fact it could answer no good purpose, I am inclined to believe she knew not, in the flurry her spirits were then in, that she had done it. After, as I said before, repeatedly tapping at her door, poor Willson had nothing for it but to wait till Miss Mennill's bell should ring: for though this was intended as a summons for her own woman, she on that day meant to be no less ready with her attendance than Mrs. Betty.

"Lord blefs me!" cried the identical Mrs. Betty, who now also came up, wondering she had not yet been called for, "what can my young lady be about? I

have

called

have been in the fidgets these two hours, longing to be employed in dressing her to the best advantage."

"Nay heaven knows," replied Willson; "here have I been waiting and waiting 'till I am weary. Surely she cannot be asleep till now on such a day as this."

At that moment the two Abigail, to their utter confusion, heard a carriage drive to the door.

"Mercy on us," cried they both in a breath, "as sure as I am a living sinner the company are arrived."

Down ran Willson to have a peep, and instantly returned screaming—"It was Sir John and his son!" All ceremony was now at an end: they both knocked and called

called with all their might, but all to no purpose.

"Lord have mercy on us!" cried the terrified Betty, "as sure as I live Madam has in a fit of despair put an end to her life. I always thought how it would end! What could my master expect better? He will now, when too late, repent of forcing her inclinations."

"O you frighten me out of my very wits!" cried Willson, a little conscience smitten. "What shall we do? how inform her father of this desperate deed—for it must, it must be as you guess! Alas! that ever I should live to see this dreadful day!"

At

At this moment a servant came with orders to Mrs. Betty to hasten her young lady, as breakfast waited.

"Aye, and it may wait long enough before my young lady partakes of it," replied Betty, weeping and sobbing, for the truly loved Miss Mennill. "A fine hand they have made of it amongst them."

"Why, what is the matter?" said John.

"Matter;" cried the women both in a breath, "why Miss Belinda is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed John, staring with affright, and his hair standing an end, "what in the name of heaven do you mean?"

"Mean,

"Mean," cried Betty, "why that she has as sure as I stand here alive, hanged herself, for we have been knocking and banging at the door these two hours, and cannot make her hear."

"And, which of us three," said the terrified John, "is to carry this news down to our master? Not I, I promise you."

"Nor I," cried Willson.

"Nay, nor I," said Betty. "Yet if you both go I dare not remain here I'm sure," looking over her shoulder as she spoke.

"What are you looking at?" cried Willson, starting, "did you see any thing?"

"I hardly

"I hardly know whether I either see or hear," replied Betty, "for my part. Do let us all go down together."

The parlour bell now rang with violence.

"Mercy on us," cried the trembling group, "what shall we do, what can we say?"

"Say," answered John, "why tell the truth to be sure; my master could expect no better."

Down they went in a body without ceremony, each of them pressing the others to go foremost. They had no sooner opened the door of the apartment where the guests were assembled, than

Mr. Men-

Mr. Mennill, wondering what so many of them wanted, cried—
“where is my daughter?”

“Where,” replied Mrs Willson, putting her handkerchief to her eyes to hide her want of tears, “in heaven by this time; Sir, I fear.”

Up started the whole party; terror and amazement in their looks.

“Mercy on us! what does the woman mean?” cried they all in a breath. “Is Miss Mennill dead then?”

“O ladies! O gentlemen!” said Willson, “’tis too true I fear for—”

“You fear!” exclaimed her master, in some measure comforted by
the

the words *I fear*, which implied a doubt, “speak instantly in a manner to be understood, woman, nor thus torture me in suspense; how is Belinda?”

Ah Sir, as I said before, I fear she has committed some rash deed, for her door is locked; we have been knocking and screaming at it for these two hours but can get no answer.”

“Merciful heaven! what is it I hear?” said Mr. Mennill, consternation, and grief on his countenance; at the same time going towards the door, all the company following him with inexpressible confusion, the mortified Charles of the number

K

muttering

muttering as he went, "by Jupiter this is the greatest bore I ever met with, this is carrying the joke too far; I think the alternative was not quite so desperate," stealing a side glance as he passed a large mirror. They reached Miss Mennill's door; it was still locked, her father called her, entreated her to open it, for he could not persuade himself to believe any thing more was the matter than some remains of her former reluctance, which but for a degree of apprehension that the servants conjectures *might be* right, he would have severely condemned, he called and called in vain, his fears, his terrors now again took possession of him; with

a voice scarce articulate he ordered the door to be forced open, when to the astonishment of the whole party on entering the room, no Miss Men- nill was to be found either dead or alive. They now gazed on each other as if to find an explanation of this mystery. Every closet, every corner was minutely searched; even places where it was utterly impos- sible she could be, were not omit- ted; never sure did a set of well dressed beaux and belles make a more ridiculous appearance than those we are now talking of; but the principal figure in the piece was the poor mortified, crest fallen Charles, he looked—but 'tis not in my power

to describe *how* he looked, and to compleat his embarrassment, every eye was fixed upon him of course."

"Why, where in the name of heaven" cried the now half-distracted Mr. Mennill "can the headstrong perverse gipsy have concealed herself? here she certainly is not. The whole house now underwent a thorough search; all the servants were strictly questioned; no intelligence, no glimmering of light could be procured, consequently they were obliged to conclude the young lady had fairly given them the slip by running away. 'Twas not a very pleasant circumstance, nor was it by any means flattering to the vanity of
Charles,

Charles, their situation was awkward beyond conception; for some moments after they returned to the room they had in such confusion quitted, a silence almost totally ensued.

At last, "this is, it must be confessed, a very foolish piece of business," said Mr. Mennill. See my friends what it is to be plagued with the charge of a daughter. That she has behaved like a fool there's no disputing, the case is too clear; however, my good friend," addressing himself to Sir John, and endeavouring to set the matter in the fairest light he could, "will you be kind enough to look upon it merely as a girlish silly

K 3

trick,

trick, and still wish to see the affair concluded in the manner you expected it would have been by this time? I will undertake to promise it shall; no fear but I shall find the sly and undutiful baggage, and find her too, I'll be sworn, cured of her folly; she will not find every house so convenient as she has ever found mine, no, no, take my word for it she will be glad to return before the week is out. What say you, young gentleman, have you a stock of love sufficient to hold out till we recover the fair fugitive, or has this specimen of *her* courage damped *your's*?"

"Fore 'gad replied Charles, I am quite petrified with astonishment, I
never

never once conceived, I was the kind of being from whom a lady would run away, the circumstance is I confess new to me; Miss Men-
nill's taste I flatter myself is rather singular," and he cast an eye on *his friend* the mirror who confirmed his assertion, "yet if a stock of love is alone wanting to bring our affairs once more in train, proceed my dear Sir with vigour, I am still your man, my courage is not so easily damped, the more difficulty, the more honour, a conquest too easily gained loses half its charms."

"Bravo" cried Sir John.

"And bravo!" echoed Mr. Men-
nill; "spoken like a fellow of spirit,"
cried

cried he Belinda shall yet be your's, (taking his hand and giving it a hearty shake), I here swear by all that's solemn and sacred she shall if in the land of the living, though such a reward is rather more than she has any claim to."

"No matter," said Sir John, "let us set her an example worthy her imitation; we all have some faults, some failings; we must bear and forbear, forget and forgive." These sentiments met with general applause, and nothing now remained in order to restore all things to peace again, except finding the fair runaway. Much was said by every one in turn concerning the way most likely

likely to succeed, and each one promised to use their best endeavours for this purpose.

Charles swore he would get a search warrant to examine every house in London, and had not a doubt but his propitious stars would guide him to the object of his adoration; again he was applauded for his spirited speech, and the party broke up in order that no time might be lost in the business.

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